



UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

This document has been downloaded from
TamPub – The Institutional Repository of University of Tampere



Publisher's version

The permanent address of the publication is <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:uta-201304081079>

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Author(s): | Lehto, Anne; Matangira, Violet; Shatona, Menete; Kahengua, Kavevangua |
| Title: | Obstacles to scholarly publishing by academic librarians |
| Main work: | Empowering People : Collaboration between Finnish and Namibian University Libraries |
| Editor(s): | Iivonen, Mirja; Helminen, Päivi; Ndinoshiho, Joseph; Sisättö, Outi |
| Year: | 2012 |
| Pages: | 270-291 |
| ISBN: | 978-951-44-8978-5 |
| Publisher: | Tampere University Press |
| School /Other Unit: | Library |
| Item Type: | Article in Compiled Work |
| Language: | en |
| URN: | URN:NBN:fi:uta-201304081079 |

All material supplied via TamPub is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all part of any of the repository collections is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or educational purposes in electronic or print form. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone who is not an authorized user.

*Anne Lehto, Violet Matangira, Menete Shatona
& Kavevangua Kahengua*

OBSTACLES TO SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING BY ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS

I. Introduction

Supporting scholarly communication is an elementary task of university libraries. Library collections, services and facilities fuel research and the creation of new knowledge conducted by faculties. Research results are communicated through publishing, mostly through journals. These are disseminated by library subscriptions and made available to the academic community to enhance research.

However, it is not common that librarians by themselves participate in scholarly publishing as authors. For the general public the idea of librarians as researchers is not familiar (Sitieni & Ocholla 2010). The role of academic libraries in scholarly communication is traditionally presented as purchasers of scholarly publications. In addition, academic libraries have been regarded as depositories where researchers can have access to information published in the past. (Meadows 1997.) Crumley and Koufogiannakis (2002) have suggested that the biggest obstacle to finding library research output is that librarians usually do not publish their research.

This survey investigates scholarly publishing activities of professional library staff at three universities, the University of Namibia (UNAM), the University of Tampere (UTA) and the University of Helsinki (HU). The aim was to find out more about librarians' perceived barriers to scholarly publishing and to find recommendations as well as solutions to encourage and motivate them to write and publish. This will not only strengthen the knowledge base of the library and information science (LIS) community but also improve the sharing of their results to the benefit of colleagues and thus enhance evidence based librarianship (e.g. Powell & Baker & Mika 2002; Booth 2003; Iivonen & Namhila 2012).

To accomplish the research objectives of this exploratory study a survey was conducted in all three universities involved. The research questions in the study were as follows:

- 1) Do librarians read LIS research literature?
- 2) Do librarians conduct work-related research?
- 3) Do librarians publish the results of their research in scholarly journals?
- 4) What are the perceived obstacles that prevent librarians from publishing?
- 5) How could the obstacles of publishing be overcome to enhance librarians' publishing activities?

2. Literary review

Scholarly publishing

The word "publish" originates from the Latin "publicare", to make public (Day 2007, 19). Making information public is nowadays very easy through various digital dissemination channels, formal

and informal. However, in this paper the authors describe scholarly publishing as only the formal dissemination of research results by publishing articles in scholarly journals or books. The concept of scholarly publishing has intentionally been chosen in the paper instead of “scientific publishing”. The function of scholarly publishing in the academic community typically includes quality control by peer review, dissemination and preservation of research results. As research is always built on earlier research, the authors decided not only to examine the librarians’ scholarly publishing but also to consider their habits of reading LIS literature, professional publishing activities as well as their work-related research practices.

Evidence based librarianship

We claim that reading of LIS literature, conducting research and publishing the results are prerequisites for evidence based librarianship (EBL). EBL is an approach that provides a powerful tool applicable as a basis for university library decision making on different levels. EBL as a method has been described in another chapter in this book (Iivonen & Namhila 2012).

Eldredge (2000) emphasizes that EBL encourages communicating research results, preferably through peer-reviewed journals or other forms of authoritative dissemination (Eldredge 2000). Communicating results is of great value for several reasons: first, for colleagues struggling with similar questions in their professional practice; second, to build the LIS knowledge base; and third, to enhance interaction between LIS academics and practitioners in order to bridge the research-practice gap (see e.g. Booth 2003; Haddow & Klobas 2004; Sitienei & Ocholla 2010). Haddow and Klobas (2004) have found 11 forms of gaps between research and practice in LIS: knowledge, culture, motivation, relevance, immediacy, publication, reading, terminology, activity, education and temporal.

University libraries as part of the universities need to be closely aligned with the needs of the community they serve (Eldredge 2006). Accordingly, librarians need to have a more profound understanding of the different phases of the research process, including scholarly communication, in order to be able to support researchers in the optimal phases of their research and to develop new services for the faculty and administration, e.g. institutional repositories and bibliometric analysis services. For these reasons, the authors suggest that librarians should be more involved in the field of academia through writing and publishing.

Reading research literature

Librarians' research-related reading has been studied, for example, by Powell et al. (2002). The results of their study showed that over 89 percent of LIS practitioners in the United States and Canada regularly read at least one research journal and almost 62 percent read research-based articles in those journals on a regular basis (Powell et al. 2002). However, Haddow and Klobas (2004) found from the LIS literature that researchers and practitioners do not read each others' publications and have concluded that there is a reading gap.

Academic librarians' scholarly publishing

Studies on academic librarians' scholarly publishing have approached the subject from several points of view. Many quantitative studies have addressed academic librarians' publication records. Weller, Hurd and Wiberley (1999) for example, investigated U.S. academic librarians' contributions to peer-reviewed LIS journals from 1993–1997 and replicated the survey in the period 1998–2002 (Wiberley & Hurd & Weller 2006). Comparing these two periods, the authors found

that there was a decline in the total number of peer-reviewed articles produced by academic librarians (Wiberley et al. 2006).

Accordingly, Sitienei and Ocholla (2010) studied through bibliometric and content analysis methods the research publication records from 1990–2006 of academic librarians in eastern and southern Africa. Interestingly, UNAM Library was one of the 46 libraries included in their study. The study indicated that southern Africa was the most prolific region with 199 publications by 89 academic librarians; whereas east African academic librarians only contributed 75 publications. The University of Namibia together with the University of Lesotho Library shared the sixth position in the ranking by publication frequency both with 11 publications. (Sitienei & Ocholla 2010.)

In their study Sitienei and Ocholla (2010, 46) recommend that regular research and publishing should be a criterion for the promotion of librarians to encourage them to engage in research and publishing.

Librarians' relation to research and their assessment of their research skills have been studied e.g. by Powell et al. (2002), and recently by Schrader, Shiri and Williamson in the University of Saskatchewan (Schrader & Shiri & Williamson 2012). In the latter, the idea was to assess the research learning needs of the academic librarians to develop additional educational activities and support that would enhance their knowledge and skills.

Barriers to scholarly publishing in the field of LIS and reasons for publication choices have been studied by Klobas and Clyde (2010). Prior to the study at hand, a pilot study was conducted at the UNAM Library by Matangira, Shatona and Kahengua (2011), where the obstacles experienced by academic librarians for scholarly publishing were elicited. The main issues raised by respondents in the survey centred on the themes of time, motivation, purpose of research, publishing forums, exposure, collaboration, training, Internet connections, knowledge of theoretical frameworks and research methodologies as well as the use of the English language. Some respondents stated that they did not know where they could publish their research findings,

while others pointed out that there is a lack of collaboration with experienced researchers who would identify research problems, thus they needed guidance. (Matangira et al. 2011.)

Co-authorship is one of the important characteristics of the research literature. Wiberley et al. (2006) have noted that in general, co-authorship has increased notably in LIS since the 1970's. Nevertheless in their studies on publication patterns in U.S. academic librarians they found 58.9 percent of articles from 1998–2002 were single authored. Moreover, they reported that the proportion of refereed co-authored articles had to some extent declined between 1993–1997 and 1998–2002 (Wiberley et al. 2006).

3. Methodology

Survey

This study uses an exploratory approach to examine scholarly publishing and related activities of librarians using the survey method of gathering information. Similar online or print questionnaires were sent out to librarians at UNAM, HU and UTA, in May–June 2012. The target population of the survey included chief librarians, library directors, librarians, information specialists, planning officers and assistant librarians employed at the three university libraries. The questionnaire survey was conducted anonymously. At UTA and HU, E-lomake-software was utilized to administer the questionnaire.

An invitation email to participate and the link to the web-survey form were sent to the professional library staff at UTA and HU on 7 May 2012 and the online survey questionnaire was open until 20 May. At the UNAM Library the survey questionnaire was sent due to technical reasons as an attachment by email to the target librarians and was open between 30 May and 8 June 2012.

Table 1. Number of responses and response rates in the survey

| | UTA | HU | UNAM | TOTAL |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|------|-------|
| Total library staff (working in 2011) | 70 | 241 | 92 | 403 |
| Target population* of the survey N | 46 | 95 | 28 | 169 |
| Responses n | 34 | 36 | 18 | 88 |
| Response rate % | 74 | 38 | 64 | 52 |

*Number of academic librarians incl. titles: chief librarian, library director, librarian, information specialist/subject librarian, assistant librarian, planning officer or equivalent.

Altogether, 88 responses were received; 36 from the HU Library, 34 from the UTA Library and 18 from the UNAM Library. The institutional response rates were higher at UTA and UNAM than at HU. As the total number of the target population was 169, the total response rate was 52 percent. No sampling method was applied as the target population was relatively small and heterogeneous. Furthermore, as the responses were anonymous, the respondents were free to suggest development ideas in their own words.

At the HU Library there were many employees with a university degree who were not included in the target population as their title was library secretary. For example, in 2011 at the HU Library the most common title was library secretary (83 employees) followed by library assistants (48 employees). These groups were not included in the study. Further, respondents in the HU Library might have been confused about the target population as the invitation was sent on a list to all 250 employees or so as no other means of distribution was available because of the limited time of the survey.

The questionnaire included both closed and open questions to invite respondents to communicate their ideas in their own words as well. It included basic demographic questions about gender, age group, the highest level of education and working experience. The language of the questionnaire was English in Namibia and Finnish in Finland. Accordingly, the Finnish results were translated into English for the purposes of this paper.

The responses of the survey were analysed using both quantitative statistical methods, especially for the data derived from the closed questions, and content analysis methods which were applied to analyse the textual parts in open-ended questions.

Respondents

The demographic background information on the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Background information of the respondents (%)

| | UTA n=34 | HU n=36 | UNAM n=18 | TOTAL n=88 |
|---------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|---------------|
| Respondents | | | | |
| GENDER | | | | |
| Female | 94 | 83 | 72 | 85 |
| Male | 6 | 17 | 28 | 15 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| AGE | | | | |
| - 30 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 2 |
| 31-40 | 15 | 14 | 41 | 20 |
| 41-50 | 29 | 42 | 35 | 36 |
| 51-60 | 47 | 33 | 18 | 36 |
| 61- | 9 | 8 | 0 | 7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| EDUCATION | | | | |
| Vocational education | 6 | 3 | 0 | 4 |
| Bachelor's degree | 6 | 8 | 43 | 13 |
| Master's degree | 82 | 78 | 57 | 76 |
| Licentiate or PhD | 6 | 11 | 0 | 7 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| WORKING EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD | | | | |
| - 2 years | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2-5 years | 3 | 8 | 22 | 9 |
| 6-10 years | 12 | 17 | 17 | 15 |
| 11-20 years | 27 | 36 | 33 | 32 |
| 20 years - | 59 | 39 | 28 | 44 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

The demographic information about the participants showed that more than 85 percent were female. Most of the respondents, i.e. 79 percent, were over 40 years old. However, the modes for the age groups

varied between universities as follows: UNAM: 31–40 years, HU: 41–50 years; UTA: 51–60 years. Accordingly, the respondents from UNAM were somewhat younger than their Finnish colleagues.

The most frequent level of the highest formal qualification was master's degree, which was reported by 76 percent of the respondents. The second most common degree was bachelor's degree by 13 percent. In addition to these, other educational qualifications were reported, for example college-level qualifications, a licentiate degree and a doctorate. The Namibian respondents also specified their honours degrees and postgraduate diplomas. The Finnish respondents were more highly educated than the Namibians.

All the respondents had at least two years of working experience in libraries or information services and 44 percent had more than 20 years of working experience in the LIS field.

Limitations

The limitation of this study is that it is based on a relatively small (88) number of survey results from three universities in two socioeconomically different countries: Namibia and Finland, thus the results are not applicable to academic librarians in general. Furthermore, the method of collecting publication data by self-reporting also has limitations compared to bibliometric studies, where publication records have been retrieved from authoritative databases, even though these have their limitations as well.

4. Results

Reading of LIS research literature

The reading of research publications is elementary to build further on research and scholarly publishing.

Table 3. Reading of LIS research literature (%)

| Reading | UTA (n=34) | HU (n=36) | UNAM (n=18) | Total (n=88) |
|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Regularly | 27 | 36 | 33 | 32 |
| Sometimes | 62 | 50 | 56 | 56 |
| Seldom | 9 | 14 | 11 | 11 |
| Never | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 101 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 3 shows that reading was quite a common activity among participants. Similarities were found between Finnish and Namibian librarians as in both groups the majority read research literature at least sometimes. There was only one respondent who reported not reading LIS research literature. In the open-ended commentary, the respondent communicated that research was not needed in his/her job.

Conducting work-related research

The participants were requested to state how often they conduct work-related research.

Table 4. Conducting work-related research (%)

| Research | UTA (n=34) | HU (n=36) | UNAM (n=18) | Total (n=88) |
|-----------|------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Regularly | 3 | 8 | 11 | 7 |
| Sometimes | 38 | 39 | 39 | 39 |
| Seldom | 38 | 31 | 28 | 33 |
| Never | 21 | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 101 |

Table 4 shows that although work-related research is not part of the regular duties for the majority of the respondents, nevertheless 46 percent of the respondents at least sometimes carried out work-related research. Still, over half of the respondents had only seldom conducted research or had never done any. The patterns of the results are surprisingly similar between the Finnish and Namibian librarians.

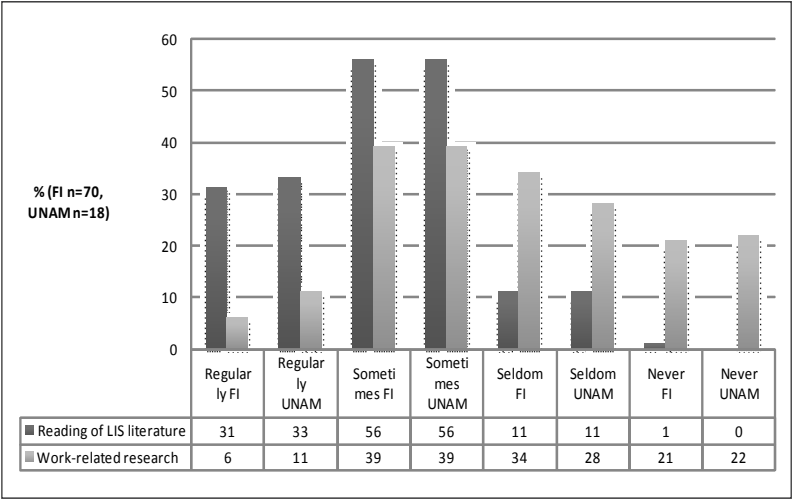


Figure 1. Comparison of the Finnish (FI) and Namibian (UNAM) participants' reading of LIS literature and conducting work-related research

Figure 1 illustrates that reading of scholarly LIS literature was a more frequent activity than conducting work-related research among participants. The results were similar between Finnish and Namibian librarians, with exactly the same percentages in many cases. Furthermore, in both groups there were about 20 percent who had never conducted work-related research.

Librarians' publishing output in scholarly publications

The respondents were asked about both scholarly and non-peer-review-ed professional publishing. This distinction was made to make the respondents consider the scholarly nature of the publications they had published in. In addition to requesting the participants to report the frequencies of their publication output, the questionnaire elicited if they had written the publications alone or together with one or several co-authors. Some respondents reported difficulties in remembering their publication frequencies and a few respondents did not indicate the number of publications.

Table 5. Publishing of scholarly articles/publications (%)

| Publishing | UTA (n=34) | HU (n=36) | UNAM (n=18) | Total (n=88) |
|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| Yes | 24 | 25 | 22 | 24 |
| No | 77 | 75 | 78 | 76 |
| Total | 101 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

The respondents were asked if they had ever published a scholarly article or publication. The similarities between results from all three universities are striking with no differences between Finnish and Namibian librarians.

Table 6. Publishing of scholarly and professional articles/publications

| | Scholarly publications n>1 | Scholarly publications n=1 | Scholarly publications n=0 | Total |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------|
| Librarians % (n=87) | 13 | 10 | 77 | 100 |
| Scholarly publications % (n=127) | 93 | 7 | 0 | 100 |
| Scholarly publications /librarian Mean (Mode) | 11 (3) | 1 (1) | 0 (0) | 1 (0) |
| Professional publications % (n=301) | 70 | 7 | 23 | 100 |
| Professional publications/ librarian Mean (Mode) | 19 (5) | 2 (0) | 1 (0) | 3 (0) |

In Table 6, the frequencies of scholarly publishing are used as an entry point and the percentages of scholarly and professional non-peer reviewed publications are given as well as the mean values and modes of publication frequencies. The modes are given as there were a few highly productive librarians and counting only mean values would not describe the data adequately.

Considering scholarly publishing, 45 percent of participants who had published scholarly papers were one-time publishers. The results showed that the four most productive librarians had published 79 percent of the scholarly publications reported. The number of scholarly publications per scholarly publishing librarian ($n=20$) was significantly high – 6 publications, yet the mean value for all librarians was lower (1).

The number of scholarly publications reported by the Namibian librarians was somewhat lower than that reported by the most productive Finnish librarians. It could also be stated that professional non-peer reviewed publishing was not common among Namibian librarians. However, professional publishing is not dealt with in detail in this paper.

Looking more closely at those librarians who had published more than one scholarly publication ($n=11$) shows that seven of them read LIS literature regularly and four read it sometimes, further reporting more research-related activities than other respondents. Librarians who had published only one research article ($n=9$) reported that they read either regularly ($n=2$), sometimes ($n=5$) or seldom ($n=2$) and they were less regularly involved in research activities.

The participants were moreover asked if they had written the scholarly publications alone or with one or several co-authors. The majority, 65 percent of those who had published scholarly papers, reported that they had experience of writing scholarly papers together with several co-authors; 45 percent reported having written together with a co-author and 60 percent reported their experience of writing alone.

Perceived obstacles that prevent librarians from publishing

The reasons why librarians do not publish the results of their research and development on a regular basis were elicited.

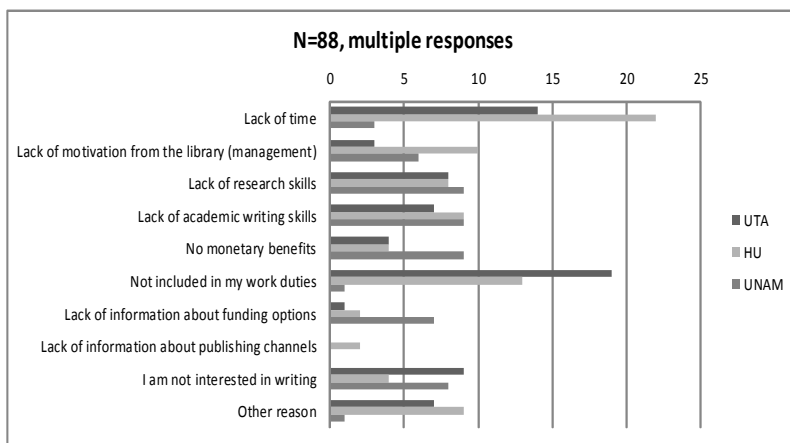


Figure 2 Frequencies of participants' perceived obstacles of writing and publishing

Figure 2 indicates that academic librarians' experienced obstacles to writing and publishing varied between universities. *Lack of time* was given as a major obstacle by Finnish librarians. However, at UNAM *Lack of time* was not among the most common barriers. At UTA the most common obstacle was *Not included in my work duties*, which at HU was the second most common barrier. The three most common barriers reported by 50 percent of UNAM participants were: *Lack of research skills*, *Lack of academic writing skills* and *Lack of monetary benefits*. Thus there were clear differences between Finnish and Namibian librarians' experienced obstacles.

In the institutions studied, the overall most common obstacle was *Lack of time* (reported by 39 participants) followed by *Not included*

in my work duties (33 responses) and thereafter *Lack of research skills* and *Lack of academic writing skills*, both of which were reported by 25 participants.

Other reasons the participants reported included in Figure 2 were for example:

- 1) Difficulties to formulate a work related theme that might be of interest to others
- 2) Personal reasons
- 3) Reasons related to the educational background
- 4) Reasons related to the organization
- 5) Difficulty of writing in English

Overcoming the obstacles of publishing to enhance librarians publishing activities

The question of how the perceived obstacles could be overcome was approached from two viewpoints. First, the respondents were asked to give suggestions on how the employer could further support their scholarly writing and publishing activities. Second, they were asked suggest how they themselves could enhance their scholarly writing and publishing.

Suggestions to the employer to support librarians publishing activities

There were altogether 56 responses on how the employer could support the scholarly writing and publishing.

Lack of time was the most frequently reported barrier to writing and publishing in the survey. Suggestions on how to improve the conditions for writing and publishing concerning the temporal gap

were numerous (n=20). The most common suggestion was simply that the employer should allocate time to research and writing. It was also commented that the duty to conduct and write up research should be clearly specified and made transparent to all employees. Many respondents were aware of the time-consuming nature of research and writing, and commented that if these would be included in the work duties, something else should be then be taken out. There was a comment about the need to switch from the daily work duties to more conceptual thinking, which needs time. One respondent commented that management should openly state that employees can use their working hours to conduct job-related research and writing.

Not included in my work duties was the second common obstacle. The respondents made suggestions (n=6) that writing and publishing could be included in the work duties when appropriate. However, several respondents commented that research and writing should not be included in the duties of all staff members as not all librarians are interested in or motivated to engage in research and writing. There were also some critical responses commenting that doing research is not a basic task of the library.

Lack of research skills and Lack of academic writing skills were both the third common barrier to the participants. Suggestions (n=8) to the employer concerning lack of research skills included: organizing training, mentoring, and starting a study group. According to the respondents there is a need for platforms, seminars, workshops, and meetings to share knowledge, skills and ideas, as well as to give feedback on research activities. There were also other practical suggestions about setting up a collaborative platform or page on the Intranet to share links to interesting articles. Suggested actions (n=8) for the employer concerning lack of academic writing skills were organizing training in academic writing, and motivating reading of the scholarly publications for example by starting a Journal Club. More training in written English was suggested as well.

Other suggestions concerned creating a research and writing friendly/intensive culture. Motivation from the library management was of utmost importance to the respondents. Motivation through monetary benefit was important to some of the librarians, who stated that remuneration systems should be introduced for research and writing activities. There were also very simple suggestions to the employer such as “positive attitude”. Furthermore, enhancing collaboration between the research community and librarians was suggested.

Suggestions to the librarians to enhance their own publishing activities

There were a total of 48 responses on what they by themselves could do to improve their writing and publishing activities. Most of the suggestions were on problems concerned with *Lack of time* (n=12), *Lack of research skills* (n=11) and *Lack of academic writing skills* (n=13).

Suggestions for overcoming the problems of *Temporal gap*, *Lack of time* were “improving my time management” or by “reorganizing my tasks”. Librarians’ ideas on how to bridge the educational gap concerning *Lack of research skills* involved suggestions such as “applying for training or mentoring”, “practice makes perfect, the more one writes, the more one improves but the environment should be an enabling one”, “participating in a course on academic writing” and by “reading scholarly publications”. Other suggestions included: “applying for a study leave”, “applying for funding”, “being persistent”, “not giving up”, “not being afraid of feedback from the peer reviewers”. Moreover, many suggestions included a social approach to enhancing publishing activities, e.g. “searching actively for co-authors”.

Several participants moreover commented that the topic of the survey was of great importance and extremely topical. Another suggestion was that a research committee should be established to coordinate the research activities of library professional staff.

5. Discussion

The results in this study indicate that the majority of academic librarians at the institutions investigated regularly or sometimes read LIS research papers. Thus we can conclude that there is no reading gap (Haddow & Klobas 2004, 31). Interestingly, the percentages of respondents reporting regularly or sometimes reading research publications was at UTA and UNAM exactly the same (89 %) as in the study by Powell et al. (2002).

Also concurring with the results of Powell et al. (2002), the percentage of librarians who regularly or sometimes carry out work-related research was more than 40 percent. Yet over half of the respondents had only conducted research seldom or never. Thus we could say that there is an activity gap (Powell et al. 2002; Haddow & Klobas 2004). The comparison of the reading and research practices revealed that reading of scholarly LIS literature is a more frequent activity among participants than conducting work-related research. This is also very similar to the findings of Powell et al. (2002).

The majority of the respondents (76 %) had never published a scholarly paper. The survey indicated that 45 percent of the participants who had published scholarly papers were one-time publishers. According to a common formula in bibliometrics called Lotka's law, the proportion of all contributors that make a single contribution to a field is about 60 percent (Lotka 1926, 323). In this study, the percentage of one-time contributors was lower and not aligned with studies reporting that the majority of academic librarians are one-time contributors (Sitieni & Ocholla 2010).

Sitieni and Ocholla (2010) found that publication per librarian was about two publications in the African regions they studied when they investigated publications by librarians in databases. The different setting must be considered, as in this study, the entry point was not a publication record, but published and non-published librarians' self-reported scholarly activities. The scholarly publication per published

librarian was as high as six publications. However, the scholarly publication per librarian in the study was only one when all non-published librarians are included.

As Meadows (1997) stated, researchers who are more active readers than average, are often also more research-active. In this study 64 percent of those who had published more than one scholarly paper also read LIS literature regularly and reported more research-related activities than other respondents.

The results on co-authorship in this study show a slightly different pattern than in earlier research as co-authorship was more common among respondents (e.g. Sitienei & Ocholla 2010).

There are several reasons considered by librarians to be obstacles to publishing their research results. *Lack of time* was given as a major obstacle by Finnish librarians. However, at UNAM *lack of time* was not among the most common barriers reported in the survey. Lack of time was also reported by Klobas and Clyde (2010) in their study as the most common barrier to publication and research.

The question of how the perceived obstacles could be overcome was approached from two viewpoints. First, the respondents were asked for suggestions on how the employer could further support their scholarly writing and publishing activities. There were many similarities in the suggestions to the ideas expressed by librarians in earlier studies (e.g. Matangira et al. 2011; Schrader et al. 2012). Altogether 56 responses were received, which provide a huge potential to improve the support for librarians' scholarly publishing and research related activities. Second, the respondents were asked for suggestions on how they themselves could enhance scholarly writing and publishing. Ideas from the participants are valuable in the future development of the institutional policies towards a more research-intensive and research-friendly culture based on EBL. Enhancing collaboration both with librarians and also between the research community and librarians was also suggested. A similar idea was reported by Matangira et al. (2011).

In this survey no respondents mentioned fear as a reason not to publish. It is common that people cite fear as a reason or excuse not to publish. They fear to submit for publication because their manuscripts or research findings may be rejected. Lack of confidence and fear that their writing may be considered shallow is another factor. Subjecting one's paper to peer review creates fear that prevents publication. Here one comes to terms with fear by learning from the guidance of the reviewers. (Day 2007.)

Several comments in respondents' own words were received in the survey, where the respondents expressed their appreciation for taking the issue under discussion and commented that the topic was of great importance and extremely topical. For example, it was suggested that a research committee should be established to coordinate the research activities of all library professional staff. Thus, the possibility of establishing some kind of supportive or coordinative structure needs to be considered in the university libraries studied.

6. Conclusions

Academic librarians' scholarly publishing and the experienced barriers to publishing were investigated in this paper. The survey was conducted at three different university libraries, two located in Finland and one in Namibia.

First, the librarians' experiences of reading LIS literature and conducting work-related research were investigated. The results indicate that academic librarians read more LIS literature than they conduct work-related research. Second, the scholarly publishing output of the librarians was elicited. The method of self-reporting the frequencies of publication has its limitations but gives information about the extent of the publishing activities.

Third, the obstacles to scholarly publishing were studied. The most common obstacle was lack of time, followed by the fact that scholarly writing and publishing were not included in the work duties. The third most common barriers were related to lack of research and academic writing skills among librarians. Finally, suggestions on how the situation for writing and publishing could be improved were received in the survey. The results of the survey indicated a generally positive attitude to and interest in scholarly publishing and related activities among academic librarians.

The authors conclude that librarians would benefit from conducting work-related research and writing scholarly articles because it has proved useful to experience the effort of research and writing a scholarly article and thus gain valuable insight into the nature of scholarly communication, including the use made of library facilities and resources as well as scholarly publishing.

The authors point out that there is a need for more thorough research on academic librarians' research activities both in Finland and Namibia as studies on this subject are lacking.

Rererences

- Booth, A. (2003). Bridging the research-practice gap? The role of evidence based librarianship. *New Review of Information & Library Research*, 9(1), 3–23.
- Crumley, E. & Koufougiannakis, D. (2002). Developing evidence-based librarianship: practical steps for implementation. *Health Information and Libraries Journal*, 19, 61–70.
- Day, A. (2007). *How to get research published in journals* (2nd ed.). Aldershot: Gower.
- Eldredge, J.D. (2000). Evidence-based librarianship: an overview. *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association*, 88(4), 289–302.
- Eldredge, J. (2006). Evidence-based librarianship: the EBL process. *Library Hi Tech*, 24(3), 341–354.

- Haddow, G. & Klobas, J.E. (2004). Communication of research to practice in library and information science: Closing the gap. *Library & Information Science Research*, 26(1), 29–43.
- Iivonen, M. & Namhila, E.N. (2012). Evidence-based librarianship as a method. In M. Iivonen, P. Helminen, J. Ndinoshiho & O. Sisättö (Eds.), *Empowering People: Collaboration between Finnish and Namibian University Libraries* (pp. 57–75). Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Klobas, J.E. & Clyde, L.A. (2010). Beliefs, attitudes and perceptions about research and publication in a professional field. *Library & Information Science Research*, 32(4), 237–245.
- Lotka, A.J. (1926). The frequency distribution of scientific productivity. *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences*, 16(12), 317–323.
- Matangira, V. & Shatona, M. & Kahengua, K. (2011). Academic writing & publishing: challenges. Paper presented at HEI ICI Seminar, Windhoek, Namibia.
- Meadows, A.J. (1997). *Communicating research*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Powell, R.R. & Baker, L.M. & Mika, J.J. (2002). Library and information science practitioners and research. *Library & Information Science Research*, 24(1), 49–72.
- Schrader, A.M. & Shiri, A. & Williamson, V. (2012). Assessment of the research learning needs of University of Saskatchewan librarians: A case study. *College & Research Libraries*, 73(2), 147–163.
- Sitienei, G. & Ocholla, D.N. (2010). A comparison of the research and publication patterns and output of academic librarians in eastern and southern Africa from 1920–2006: a preliminary study. *South African Journal of Library and Information Science*, 76(1), 36–48.
- Weller, A.C. & Hurd, J.M. & Wiberley, S.E. (1999). Publication patterns of U.S. academic librarians from 1993 to 1997. *College & Research Libraries*, 60(4), 352–362.
- Wiberley, S.E. & Hurd, J.M. & Weller, A.C. (2006). Publication patterns of U.S. academic librarians from 1998 to 2002. *College & Research Libraries*, 67(3), 205–216.